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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 001504

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [MCAP](#) [SY](#) [IS](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: LAUNCH OF GERMAN BORDER PROJECT
DELAYED...AGAIN

REF: BEIRUT 1272

Classified By: DCM William Grant for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: At the weekly donors meeting for the German Northern Border Pilot Program (NBPP) on September 26, Detlef Karioth, Coordinator of the NBPP, announced that the operational launch date had been delayed for another four weeks until November 15. There are a number of reasons for this postponement, including delayed equipment acquisition and concerns raised at the last minute by the LAF Commander General Sleiman. British and Canadian donor representatives are extremely frustrated by these roadblocks, which they feel should have been resolved months ago. The British representative also shared that the Germans have taken the lead in Brussels discussions of the proposed EU initiative to address the eastern Lebanese-Syrian border. According to the British representative, Germany will likely be appointed by the EU to lead any new initiatives for the eastern border. However, based on the track record of the NBPP, the British representative recommends the appointment of a strong second-in-command from another EU country to keep the program on track. End Summary.

Operational Launch Postponed

12. (C) On September 26, Karioth announced to donor representatives that the operational launch date for the NBPP has been postponed again. Operations were originally slated to begin on September 1, then the date was pushed back to October 15. Now Karioth informed donors that the Common Border Force (CBF) will not begin field operations until November 15. Karioth cited a variety of reasons for the delay, which included both small administrative details, ranging from a debate on the type of light bar to put on top of donated vehicles to air conditioning and flooring in new classrooms and offices, to larger concerns, such as the fact that the GOL still has not provided a VAT exemption for the donated equipment coming from sources abroad.

13. (C) However, there is also some good news to report. The Danish contingent is on track with the training component. A basic classroom has been set up and Danish technical trainers will begin on October 1 with a three day seminar on crisis management for senior CBF officers. The Germans have also asked the Finns to become involved by sending some training experts, as well. This request is currently being considered in Helsinki.

Sleiman Raises Concerns About German Pilot Program

14. (C) LAF Commander General Sleiman recently expressed concerns on the NBPP and Karioth met with the LAF's Director of Operations, Brig. Gen. Francois El-Hajj to discuss these concerns in detail. According to Hajj, Sleiman does not want any "Common Border Force" logo to appear on the donated vehicles. In addition, Sleiman also wants the LAF's Northern Regional Commander to also be the commander of the CBF. He does not want two separate commanders operating in the same Area of Operations.

15. (C) This directly contradicts agreements that were reached over the summer (reftel) and raised a number of concerns for other donors, particularly the Canadians. First, donors had planned to put a unique logo on the CBF's patrol cars to prevent them from being co-opted into non-CBF work as these vehicles are being donated for a specific purpose. Also, if the LAF Northern Regional Commander is also the head of the CBF, the donated goods will come under de facto control of that LAF division rather than this unique hybrid force, the CBF. Canadian domestic law prohibits contributions of this nature to the LAF, which is one of the reasons why Karioth had originally asked for a separate commander for the CBF. Karioth also expressed concern that the LAF Northern Regional Commander has enough on his plate dealing with the aftermath of the armed conflict in the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp. The Germans want a Lebanese commander who can devote his full attention to the NBPP and the CBF.

16. (C) On the margins of a separate meeting on September 27, EmbOffs raised this issue with General Rifi, Director General of the Internal Security Force (ISF). His ISF officers will

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also participate in the Common Border Force and he has been involved in the development of the NBPP. Rifi confirmed that he and Karioth had discussed the command structure issue on September 26. Rifi indicated that while the LAF Northern Border Commander will be in charge of the CBF, there will also be a separate senior LAF officer who will focus solely on CBF issues. "It will all work out fine," said Rifi. It remains to be seen how the Canadians will be able to deal with this new twist, given the constraints of their international assistance regulations.

EU Contributes Funds for Two New Separate Border Security Programs

17. (C) While the NBPP appears delayed for the time being, EU reps, who are back in town after the summer holidays, announced two new border control initiatives separate from the NBPP, with an initial EU investment of USD 1.2 million.

- Risk Analysis System: This database will be installed at all entry points into Lebanon. The purpose of the system is to establish and maintain a database to track data, such as the number of vehicles stopped per day per border crossing, a list of smuggled items, suspected smugglers, etc. When asked if this new database would then be shared with other Lebanese security agencies, EU reps responded that this had not been decided. However, oddly, they had already made plans to share the data with other international members of the World Customs Organization outside of Lebanon.

- Radioactive Detection Equipment: This IAEA project, funded by the EU, is designed to screen potential nuclear/radioactive material that may be smuggled into Lebanon. Scanners will be installed at all border entry points and are designed to check for radiological material in scrap metal and in vehicles (Note: Lebanon imports a significant amount of scrap metal from Russia and Iraq).

British Representative Comments on New EU Border Initiative

¶18. (C) In a conversation after the meeting, the British donor representative Jeremy Chivers) who has been involved with NBPP from the start) once again expressed his extreme frustration with Karioth's leadership. Chivers said Karioth and his German colleagues are now grappling with issues that should have been agreed upon with Lebanese counterparts months ago. Also, German project director Karioth seems to be on his way out. Karioth departs Beirut on September 28 for two weeks of leave, which raised some eyebrows in the room considering the current delays facing the NBPP. Karioth will return for two weeks at the end of October before turning the project over to his successor, whose name has not yet been provided to the donors. Karioth's successor will coordinate the NBPP through March 2008, which is the end of current EU funding for implementation and an after-action evaluation and analysis period.

¶19. (C) In regards to the Moratinos proposal on border monitoring , Chivers also expressed skepticism about Syria's commitment to improved security on the eastern border. Chivers said the UK agrees with our desire to have Syria show &good faith8 in concrete ways before going ahead with any cooperative programs.

¶10. (C) Chivers also shared that the Germans have taken the lead on this topic during discussions in Brussels. Chivers agrees that the German office in Beirut seems to be positioning itself to continue its leadership role on border issues. Under such a plan, however, based on the experiences to date of the NBPP, the British will recommend that a strong second-in-command from another EU country be appointed to help keep the program on track. (The British currently have a technical expert on the ground setting up the Common Operation Center who might be a likely candidate.)

Comment

¶11. (C) Karioth and his German colleagues currently working on the NBPP in Beirut are experts on border security issues and the program they have designed looks very good on paper. However, it appears the Germans are not experts on getting

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things done in Lebanon. Karioth underestimated the number of players who could sideline initiatives and he did not factor in delays that often occur in this environment. Karioth also failed to grasp the political and public diplomacy aspects of the initiative. He should have involved the Prime Minister's office early and often to resolve inter-agency disputes and he should have been working in a more methodical way to build local public support for this new Common Border Force. Hopefully the new German NBPP Coordinator will bring a different skill set to the project. End Comment.
FELTMAN